

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1375

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, March 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to eliminating foster care citizen review boards.

Brief Description: Eliminating foster care citizen review boards.

Sponsors: Representatives Roberts, Appleton, Walsh, Kagi, Liias, Upthegrove and Kenney.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/23/09, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 3/17/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Kauffman and McAuliffe.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: Foster Care Citizen Review Boards (CR Boards) were established as a pilot program to be administered by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) during the 1989-91 biennium. The sum of \$500,000 was appropriated to implement the pilot. The CR Boards were designed with the intent of creating local volunteer citizen review boards to advise county-based superior court judges on children's dependency cases. The CR Boards were exempted from some of the procedures and standards applicable to administrative and judicial hearings and received training in confidentiality requirements and conflict of interest matters.

Historical budget notes indicate CR Boards were implemented in Snohomish, Yakima, and Clallam counties. Additional funding was appropriated in the 1991-93 biennium, but in the 1993-95 biennium, program funding was eliminated from the AOC budget because the cost-effectiveness of the program was in doubt.

After funding was eliminated, only Snohomish County continued to utilize a CR Board in its processing of children's dependency cases. In January 2009, however, Snohomish County eliminated its CR Board, based in part on the county's budget constraints.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: The chapter and related session laws establishing local volunteer foster care citizen review boards are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: At the time this bill was drafted, the only citizen review board was located in Snohomish County, but at this time, that board has been shut down. Since all of the citizen review boards are gone now, the statutes permitting them should be taken off the books. Another reason to remove them is that they seem to slow down the process of reunification and since increased reunifications are a goal of the system, these boards seem counter to that goal.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Roberts, prime sponsor